

OWNERS OF THE FISHING SCHOONER UNCLE AMASA.

[To accompany bill H. R. 628.]

DECEMBER 19, 1856.

Mr. COMINS, from the Committee on Commerce, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the petition of the owners of the fishing schooner Uncle Amasa, lost at sea, praying for an allowance of bounty, beg leave to report:

It appears, from the petition of the owners, (the names of all of whom are attached,) that the "Uncle Amasa" was built at East Boston, in the State of Massachusetts, in the year 1848, and was of the burden of 70 $\frac{3}{4}$ tons; that said schooner, in the spring of 1852, was duly licensed and fitted for a codfishing voyage on the banks of Newfoundland, on which voyage she sailed in the month of April of said year; that she was last seen on said banks, in the month of June succeeding, engaged in the codfishery and doing well; that, as she has never returned nor been heard from since that time, it is supposed she subsequently foundered at sea, portions of her hull having been discovered in the vicinity of "Quireau," the bank where she had been engaged in fishing; that said schooner was manned with an experienced captain and crew, all of whom, it is supposed, perished, leaving destitute widows and orphan children; and upon this state of facts Congress is asked to pass an act granting to the petitioners the amount of bounty which the said schooner would have earned had she completed her fishing voyage and returned safely to port, to be divided among the owners and bereaved relatives of the deceased crew in accordance with the provisions of the bounty acts.

To the petition of the owners are appended the names of the widows and orphan children of the deceased, together with a certificate of the collector of the Barnstable district that the said schooner was duly licensed for the codfishery on the 10th of March, 1852; that the owners are honorable and responsible men; and that, so far as is known to the revenue officers of the district, at the time of the loss of the said vessel, she was honestly engaged in the codfishing business. An affidavit is also enclosed from Cyrus Weeks, to the effect that he had sailed in the said schooner, and that about the 20th of October, while at the harbor of Cape Canso, Nova Scotia, he saw, on board of a schooner belonging to Cape Canso, a binnacle, which he recognized at once as having belonged to the Uncle Amasa; that the captain

informed him it was picked up about six miles from the land, off the harbor called County harbor, Nova Scotia; that it contained two compasses, and had the whole of the name Uncle Amasa painted on the forward part, and the initials on the two sides; and that there is no doubt, therefore, of the identity of the binnacle.

Under the general law no allowance could be made; the necessity for a special act arising from this fact, that the vessel had not, so far as is known, completed the "fishing term" of four months, by which she would have been entitled to the allotted bounty. Whether that "fishing term" were completed, and the schooner lost on her "returning to any port in the United States," is, therefore, a matter entirely of conjecture; but, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, and in accordance with what the committee believe to be the spirit and policy of the acts of Congress relating to the codfisheries, to which protection has been wisely extended by the government from its earliest periods, and in accordance, moreover, with the previous action of Congress in similar cases, a bill is herewith reported for the relief of the petitioners, in behalf of which the sanction of the House is invoked.